

# FASET Bulletin APD03 (Revision 2)

## Upper Floor Access Hatches

### Introduction

During the installation and dismantling of the Access Platform Decking system, access is required through the upper floor levels and as such, an access hatch is often required. Inadequate and unplanned access hatches often can't be easily identified by the installers of Access Platform Decking systems or other operatives and may not be secured from moving or opening which can create an unprotected opening which operatives can fall through.

Without early consideration and use of designed and tested Access Hatches can lead to inadequate access provisions being put in place which may contravene the requirements of the Work at Height Regulations and lead to an unsafe working area where falls may occur. Edge Protection may be required if there is a need for the Access Hatch to remain open and the void is large enough for an operative to fall through.

### Types of Access Hatch

| Hatch Type | Suitable for            | Description  |
|------------|-------------------------|--|
| Materials  | Materials only          | Small hatch that doesn't allow an operative to fall through the floor if left open   |
| Personnel  | Personnel only          | Large hatch which allows ladders to be pushed through and allow access and egress of personnel only. Should not be left open and isn't designed for materials to be passed through without further control measures. |
| Integrated | Materials and personnel | Incorporates a number of small hatches within a large hatch to allow for personnel and materials to pass through. Different hatches / combinations of hatches are opened dependent upon the intended use.            |

### Bad Practice

As an example, the images below demonstrate the result of an unplanned and inadequate access hatch. A section of the floor had been removed to allow for access and simply placed back when finished with. An operative who was unaware of the removed section of floor stood on the hatch which dislodged, causing him to fall and sustain serious injuries.



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Another example of bad practice is shown in the images below. A section of the floor has been removed without an Access Hatch in place and an inadequate temporary / sacrificial joist has been installed in an attempt to support the weakened floor.



### Considerations for Site Managers, Project Managers & Deputies

FASET recommend that a designed Access Hatch is positioned 300mm off either wall in the corner of the floor.

When an Access Hatch is being positioned above Access Platform Decking (i.e. for the floor above), the Access Hatch should be positioned above a full panel and should not impede on a corner of any panel. This ensures that when Access Platform Decking is installed on subsequent floors the legs will not be positioned on top of the Access Hatch and therefore won't restrict the Access Hatches use.

- Early consideration of personnel and material access to upper-level floors is required to avoid unplanned and poorly designed Access Hatches being installed and used.
- Upper-level timber floors are still temporary until fully completed and therefore they should be part of the main contractors' site inspection/quality and monitoring control processes and Temporary Works Register
- Any alterations to upper floors should be adequately designed by a competent Temporary Works Designer and signed off by the Temporary Works Coordinator prior to any access. This includes the provision of Access Hatches and temporary edge protection systems.
- Site managers should plan the works so that Access Platform Decking installers safety requirements are considered prior to work commencing, including access to and from upper floors, as well as a safe working area when on the floor.
- The correct type of Access Hatch needs to be identified and then installed and used in accordance with the manufacturer's user instructions.
- Only designed and tested Access Hatches should be used
- Check access hatch installations have been installed in accordance with the Temporary Works Design.
- Where it has been identified that Edge Protection is required, ensure the system has been designed and calculated in accordance with BS EN 13374 Class A and installed in accordance with the Temporary Works Design.
- All temporary access arrangements should be checked and handed over as compliant by a competent person prior to works commencing in accordance with BS 5975: 2019 - *Code of practice for temporary works procedures and the permissible stress design of falsework.*

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- The location and Access Hatches must be communicated to the workforce, including Access Platform Decking installers.
- Ensure control measures are suitable and sufficient

#### **Considerations for Supervisors**

- Satisfy yourself that you are working in the correct area and that the upper-floor is safe to work on, including suitable Access Hatch provision
- Review the work activities periodically and ensure that the chosen control measures remain suitable so that no person is put at risk
- Hold discussions with your work teams and highlight any specific hazards associated with their work
- Ensure that all control measures have been communicated, are in place and are being maintained
- Stop the work immediately if any of the control measures are felt to be insufficient / not appropriate or if it is found that the access hatch has been tampered with

#### **Considerations for Access Platform Decking Installers / Dismantlers**

- Ensure you have received a site induction.
- Ensure you have received and understood the risk assessment and method statement for your work.
- Ensure that you and your colleagues are working in accordance with the risk assessment and method statement.
- Confirm with client's Site Manager that the upper floor has been finished, is free from defects, and is safe to work on.
- Prior to accessing the floor, check from below for any obvious defects such as missing or dislodged floor panels.
- Always use the access hatches provided to gain access to the upper floor of new build properties (or safe access from external scaffold).
- Once on the upper floor, carry out a visual inspection that the flooring panels look sound and that is not covered in debris. If there are any issues, speak to the client's site manager so that issues can be rectified / the floor cleared.
- Provide information or ideas that you think could make your work safer.
- Stop working if you feel anything is unsafe.

#### **References**

The Work at Height Regulations 2005, SI 2005/735.

BSI (British Standards Institution). 2019. *BS 5975: Code of practice for temporary works procedures and the permissible stress design of falsework*. London: BSI.

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